

Slithering Snakes



When you walk, your feet push against the ground. A fish's fins push against the water. A bird's wings push against the air. Pushing against something helps animals move forward. A snake doesn't have fins or wings or feet to move from place to place. How does it push its body forward?

The Banded Sea Snake

A banded sea snake wriggles and pushes through the water.



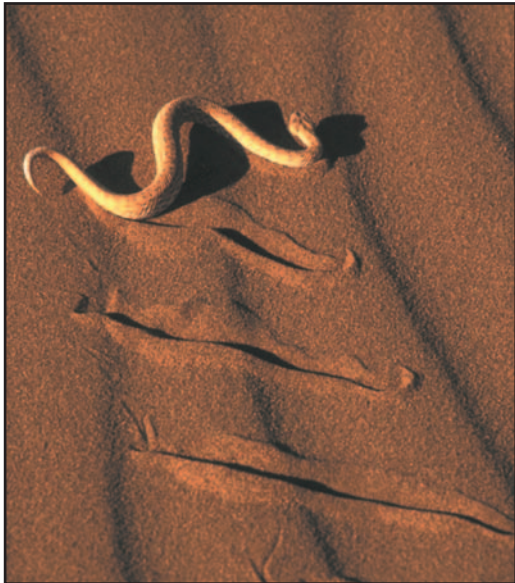
The Mexican King Snake

A Mexican king snake curves its long, flexible body back and forth, pushing against grass and rocks to slither along the ground.



The Carpet Python

Most snakes have special scales on their bellies called **scutes**. These scutes help them grip the ground. A carpet python is too big and heavy to wriggle. But it crawls forward slowly by using its belly muscles to push its scutes against the ground.



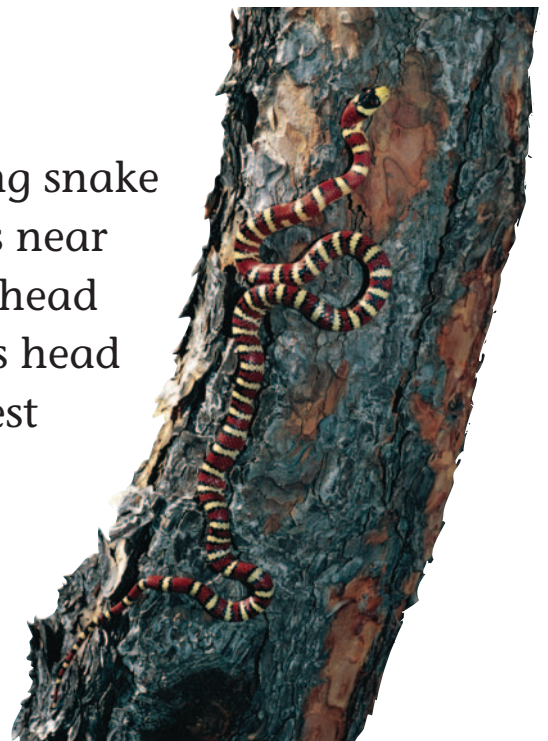
The Sidewinding Adder

The sidewinding adder lives in the desert. Its scutes have a hard time getting a grip on the loose sand. To move, the adder arches its back and throws its body in the direction it wants to go. Then it flicks its head in the same direction. Finally it pulls its tail along, over and over, in a sideways, looping motion.

The Arizona Mountain King Snake

To climb a tree, an Arizona mountain king snake moves its body like an accordion. The scutes near its tail hold on tight while the snake lifts its head higher up the trunk. Then the scutes near its head grip the bark while the snake pulls up the rest of its body.

Snakes can wriggle, slither, crawl, swim, and climb with the help of their scutes.



Adapted from an article by Melissa Stewart
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